

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 R

66617
DRAFTED BY: ARA-LA/PLC:RJBLOOMFIELD
APPROVED BY: ARA-LAPLC:RJBLOOMFIELD
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R 171553Z OCT 75
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION NATO

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FOLLOWING REPEAT SANTIAGO 6841 SENT SECSTATE INFO ASUNCION
BRASILIA BUENOS AIRES LA PAZ LIMA MONTEVIDEO QUITO GENEVA
USUN USCINCO DATED OCT 10.

QUOTE

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 6841

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CI, PFOR, PINT
SUBJECT: CHILE'S GOVERNMENT AFTER TWO YEARS

REFS: A) SANTIAGO A-231, DECEMBER 20, 1974; B) SANTIAGO 6114

1. SUMMARY: WE SEEK IN THIS CABLE TO APPRAISE THE CURRENT
SITUATION IN CHILE: CHARACTERISTICS OF ITS GOVERNMENT,
CURRENT STRAINS IN ITS ECONOMY, THE OVERRIDING INFLUENCE OF
INTERNAL SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS, AND THE PROBLEM OF MAINTAINING
BROAD POLITICAL SUPPORT, AS WELL AS TOLERABLE FOREIGN RELATIONS.
WE CONCLUDE THAT DESPITE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES, NO MAJOR CHANGES
SEEM IMMINENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT: CHILE'S GOVERNMENT IS RUN BY LEADERS
OF ARMED FORCES, AND MILITARY INFLUENCE PERVADES MOST OF CHILEAN
SOCIETY. MILITARY LEADERS ARE HONEST, DEDICATED, AND HARD WORKING,
AND BELIEVE THEY ARE ACTING IN BEST INTEREST OF CHILEAN PEOPLE
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AND NATION. THEY HAVE MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO THEIR CREDIT(
GOC HAS GOTTEN THE COUNTRY RUNNING AGAIN AFTER BREAKDOWN UNDER
ALLENDE, RESTORED INTERNAL PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, AND ENDED
EXAGGERATED POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND INTRIGUE CHARACTERISTIC

OF ALLENDE YEARS AND EARLIER. IT HAS TAKEN HEROIC MEASURES TO CONTROL INFLATION AND TO CREATE BASE FOR A HEALTHY ECONOMY. ITS ADMINISTRATION, IN MARKED CONTRAST TO ALLENDE'S, HAS BEEN REASONABLY COMPETENT AND EFFECTIVE. IT HAS EMBARKED ON LONG-RANGE REFORM OF MANY OF CHILEAN BASIC INSTITUTIONS -- REFORMS THAT IN MANY RESPECTS ARE LONG OVERDUE.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MILITARY LEADERS, HOWEVER, EXTEND FAR BEYOND THESE ACHIEVEMENTS. LEADERS BELIEVE TRADITIONAL WESTERN DEMOCRACY CANNOT COPE WITH CHALLENGE OF COMMUNIST STATES, OR WITH ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF MODERN WORLD. THEY THEREFORE ARE TRYING TO BUILD A NEW POLITICAL SYSTEM IN CHILE THAT CAN WITHSTAND MARXIST OFFENSIVE, AND ASSURE CHILE STRONG AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT. BY THEIR OWN DEFINITION, THIS STATE WILL BE HIGHLY AUTHORITARIAN; IT WILL BEAR LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO CHILE'S TRADITIONAL REPRESENTATIVE, PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY. MILITARY WILL RETAIN EMERGENCY POWERS AS LONG AS THREAT OF SUBVERSION EXISTS AND ECONOMY IS UNSTABLE.

4. THE CREAKY ECONOMY: CHILE IS GOING THROUGH AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM (ERP) DESIGNED TO REDUCE BOTH IMPORTS AND DOMESTIC INFLATION. ANNOUNCED IN APRIL AND INSTITUTED IN MAY, PROGRAM WAS GOC'S RESPONSE TO A SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS. BY END OF FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 1975, FOR EXAMPLE, MANUFACTURING, COMPARED TO SAME PERIOD IN 1974, HAD DECLINED 17 PERCENT, AND CONSTRUCTION BY 30 PERCENT. INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT WERE STILL ACCELERATING. ABANDONING ITS EARLIER GRADUALIST APPROACH AS UNSUCCESSFUL, GOC IMPOSED ITS PRESENT RIGOROUS AUSTERITY PROGRAM.

5. THE COSTS RESULTING FROM THE PROGRAM ARE VERY GREAT. SOME FIRMS HAVE EVEN SHUT DOWN COMPLETELY, LEAVING FULL STOCKS OF RAW MATERIALS UNPROCESSED AND FINISHED PRODUCTS UNSOLD/ OFFICIALS OF MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION NOW PREDICT A 1975 PRODUCTION DECREASE OF AT LEAST 25 PERCENT. UNEMPLOYMENT HAS REACHED HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 1930'S. ABOUT 16 PERCENT OF WORK FORCE IN SANTIAGO AREA WAS OUT OF WORK IN JUNE 1975, WITH UNEMPLOYMENT IN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR AS HIGH AS 23 PERCENT. EMBASSY NOW ESTIMATES OVERALL RATE
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AT 18-22 PERCENT, BUT UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG ORDINARY LABORERS IS THOUGHT TO BE MORE THAN TWICE THAT FOR WHITE COLLAR WORKERS, AND THREE TIMES THAT FOR SELF-EMPLOYED. MOREOVER, THESE FIGURES DO NOT MEASURE OVERTIME LOSS, WORK WEEKS REDUCED, OR SHIFTS TOWARD LOWER-PAYING JOBS (E.G., FROM CONSTRUCTION WORK TO STREET VENDING).

6. PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S SPEECH OF SEPTEMBER 11 REFLECTED BOTH HIS DETERMINATION TO CARRY AUSTERITY PROGRAM THROUGH UNFLINCHINGLY, AND JUNTA'S CONCERN OVER ITS SOCIAL COSTS. WITHIN ITS SELF-IMPOSED BUDGETARY RESTRAINTS, GOC HAS INTRODUCED A MINIMUM WORK PROGRAM (A KIND OF WPA), NOW BENEFITTING ABOUT 85,000 WORKERS, WHILE PRIVATE INDUSTRY ITSELF HAS TRIED TO MITIGATE SOME HARDSHIPS. A NUMBER

OF CLOSED ENTERPRISES ARE KEEPING WORK FORCES ON PAYROLL, DRAWING ON OWNERS' SAVINGS TO MEET COSTS IN SOME CASES, AND ON CAPITAL MARKET IN OTHERS. WORKERS SOMETIMES HAVE AGREED TO DRAW DOWN ON FUTURE PAID LEAVE. PRIVATE CHARITY, PARTICULARLY FROM CHURCHES, HAS ALSO BEEN A FACTOR. BUT THESE ARE ONLY PALLIATIVES.

7. IT IS STILL FAR FROM CERTAIN THAT ERP WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN ATTAINING ITS DECLARED OBJECTIVES, OR THAT PRESENT HARDSHIPS ARE JUSTIFIED TO THAT END. THERE ARE SOME POSITIVE INDICATORS: SHRINKING DOMESTIC DEMAND HAS NOT ONLY REDUCED IMPORTS BUT HAS ALSO COMPELLED CHILEAN PRODUCES TO SEEK OVERSEAS OUTLETS FOR THEIR GOODS, WITH REASONABLE INITIAL SUCCESS. GOC EXCHANGE POLICY PROVIDES ADDITIONAL INCENTIVE FOR EXPORTERS, SINCE CURRENCY HAS BEEN DEVALUED AT SOMEWHAT FASTER RATE THAN DOMESTIC INFLATION. THE COMPLEX OF ECONOMIC EFFECTS -- INCREASE IN A VARIETY OF NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS, REDUCTION IN IMPORTS, DEBT RESCHEDULING, AN IMF STANDBY, AND SOME US HELP -- HAVE COMBINED TO HELP ACHIEVE THE BALANCE OF PAYMENT OBJECTIVES OF THE GOC'S PROGRAM FOR 1975. HOWEVER, THE SLOW PACE OF WORLD ECONOMIC RECOVERY, RESULTING IN THE STAGNATION OF COPPER PRICES AT UNPRECEDENTEDLY LOW REAL LEVELS, TOGETHER WITH THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED INCREASE IN OIL PRICES, ARE UNLIKELY TO GENERATE OPTIMISM OR SUSTAIN DOMESTIC IMPROVEMENT. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ECONOMIC PROGRAM -- TO REACH BY YEAR'S END A MONTHLY INFLATION RATE OF NOT MORE THAN FIVE PERCENT -- HAS NOT YET BEEN ACHIEVED. IN THEORY, DRASTICALLY REDUCED DEMAND SHOULD HAVE THIS EFFECT, AND VERY POSSIBLY A TREND IN THIS DIRECTION HAS SET IN. BUT ABSENT MORE SIGNS OF RECOVERY, WE QUESTION HOW LONG THE JUNTA CAN PERSIST IN A PROGRAM AT VARIANCE
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WITH CHILE'S SOCIAL WELFARE TRADITION AND SEVERELY AFFECTING THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF ITS LOWER INCOME GROUPS AND MIDDLE CLASS SUPPORTERS.

8. INTERNAL SECURITY AND POLITICAL CONTROL: ECONOMIC SITUATION AND ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WORRY GOC, BUT HAVE NOT VISIBLY WEAKENED THE JUNTA'S OVERALL CONTROL. AT THE MOMENT, THERE IS NO SERIOUS EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL THREAT TO THE JUNTA'S AUTHORITY. THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY NEVERTHELESS CONTINUES TO BE A PRIME FACTOR IN GOVERNMENT THINKING. IMMEDIATE THREAT SHARPLY DECREASED WITH VIRTUAL DESTRUCTION OF EXTREMIST MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR) IN LATE 1974, AND WHILE SOME POTENTIAL FOR ISOLATED TERRORIST ACTS CONTINUES TO EXIST, IT IS SMALL AND CERTAINLY NOT A MAJOR UNSETTLING FACTOR. ON THE OTHER HAND, UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNIST PARTY -- A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A SECURITY HAZARD -- CONTINUE QUIETLY, AND REGIME CRACKS DOWN HARD ON EVEN OLD-STYLE POLITICAL EXPRESSION, PLANNING AND DISSENT. MAJOR JUSTIFICATION FOR ACTIVITIES OF SECURITY FORCES CAN THUS BE VIEWED FROM TWO ASPECTS: PRECLUSIVE BREAKUP OF CONTINUING PLOTTING BY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS, AND DISCOURAGEMENT OF POLITICAL DISSIDENCE. GOC ACTIVITIES AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD STEM FROM OVERRIDING EMPHASIS PLACED ON THESE OBJECTIVES.

9. DESPITE WIDE CONTROL NOW EXERCISSED BY GOC, THERE ARE STILL ORGANIZED FORCES IN CHILE NOT TOTALLY DOMINATED BY IT -- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, CATHOLIC CHURCH, TRADE UNIONS, COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA, UNIVERSITIES, AND PROFESSIONAL AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS ("GERMIOS" -- WHO SUPPORT GOC). AS GOC HAS SUBSTANTIALLY CONSOLIDATED ITS POWER IN LAST YEAR, HOWEVER, THESE FORCES HAVE ON THE WHOLE BECOME WEAKER AS POLITICAL INSTRUMENTALITIES, LESS WILLING TO ENGAGE IN CONFRONTATION, AND LESS ABLE TO INFLUENCE COURSE OF EVENTS.

10. THE JUNTA CAME TO POWER WITH WIDE SUPPORT IN CHILEAN SOCIETY. IT STILL APPEARS TO HAVE BEHIND IT THE SUPPORT -- MUCH OF IT ACTIVE AND FERVENT -- OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE OF MOST CHILEANS. IN ITS FAVOR IS CONTINUING ABSENCE OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE: NO SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENT CONSIDERS CHILE READY FOR RESTORATION OF PRE-ALLENDE TYPE REGIME AT THIS TIME; YET THERE IS NO VISIBLE MANDATE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF PERMANENT AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEM. GOC HAS MADE NO SERIOUS EFFORT TO BROADEN ITS POLITICAL BASE,
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AND INDEED HAS SPECIFICALLY AND CATEGORICALLY REJECTED TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC FORCES. GOVERNMENT'S HARD-CORE SOURCE OF SUPPORT HAS THEREFORE BECOME INCREASINGLY RESTRICTED TO CONSERVATIVE TO EXTREME RIGHT, INCLUDING MANY MIDDLE-CLASS PERSONS FORMERLY INACTIVE POLITICALLY. GOC LEADERS HAVE DEBATED MERITS OF FORMING A "CIVIC MOVEMENT" AS A PRO-GOVERNMENT POLITICAL (ALTHOUGH OSTENSIBLY APOLITICAL) RALLYING DEVICE, AND PRESIDENT PINOCHET FINALLY OFFERED GOVERNMENT'S "ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT" TO IDEA IN HIS RECENT SEPTEMBER 11 SPEECH. CIVIC MOVEMENT OFFICIALLY BORN LAST APRIL, HOWEVER, HAS YET TO BE GIVEN ANY SIGNIFICANT FUNCTION OR TO SHOW ITSELF IMPORTANT IN PRESENT SCENE.

11. GROWING UNEASE: DESPITE THIS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR OR ACQUIESCENCE IN PRESENT REGIME, WE BELIEVE A WIDELY PREVALENT SENSE OF UNEASE IS EMERGING IN CHILEAN SOCIETY, THOUGH IT HAS NOT YET REACHED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANT DISCONTENT WITH MILITARY LEADERSHIP AS SUCH. SUCH A PHENOMENON CANNOT BE MEASURED, AND EMBASSY CANNOT BE SURE HOW WIDESPREAD IT IS, BUT IT APPEARS TO BE GROWING AND IS EXTENDING INTO AREAS THAT ORIGINALLY STRONGLY SUPPORTED GOC. IT STEMS PRIMARILY FROM DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND ONLY IN MORE RESTRICTED CIRCLE FROM IMPEDIMENTS TO EXERCISE OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS. IT IS QUESTIONABLE THAT SITUATION WILL IMPROVE QUICKLY ENOUGH IN EITHER RESPECT TO STEM DOUBTS AND REPLACE THEM WITH CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE. FEELING IS NOT CONFINED TO PUBLIC. IT OCCASIONALLY SURFACES IN SENIOR MILITARY CIRCLES, WHERE IT IS COMPOUNDED BY SOME CONCERN OVER ACTIVITIES OF INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES, AND BY SOME RESENTMENT OVER PINOCHET'S INCREASING AND EXCLUSIVE PROMINENCE AS PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC.

12. PINOCHET'S POWER AND PUBLIC EXPOSURE HAVE GROWN NOTABLY,

AND HE HAS RECENTLY MADE SOME IMPORTANT DECISIONS WITHOUT CONSULTING HIS JUNTA COLLEAGUES. ONLY OTHER JUNTA MEMBER WITH SUFFICIENTLY FORCEFUL PERSONALITY TO STAND UP TO HIM IS AIR FORCE CINC GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH, WHO FEELS PRESSURE FROM HIS OFFICERS AND IS PUBLICLY PUTTING SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PINOCHET. IN REACTION TO GROWTH OF FEELING WITHIN JUNTA, AND AS PUBLIC BEGAN TO BE AWARE OF IT, JUNTA RECENTLY ADDRESSED PROBLEM AND AGREED THAT PINOCHET WOULD CONSULT OTHER MEMBERS MORE CAREFULLY. INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION BETWEEN PINOCHET AS CHIEF EXECUTIVE, AND

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JUNTA AS SOURCE OF LEGISLATIVE/CONSTITUENT POWER, CONTINUES TO EXIST, HOWEVER, AND THUS BASIS FOR FRICTION REMAINS.

13. FOREIGN AFFAIRS: AS IS THE CASE DOMESTICALLY, CHILE'S LEADERS TEND TO VIEW EXTERNAL WORLD IN TERMS OF FRIEND OR FOE. THE ENEMY IS THE SAME: "MARXISTS" AND THEIR REAL OR PRESUMED DUPES. BUT TOUGH MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST DOMESTIC ENEMY, WHICH THE REGIME SEES AS PRIORITY PROBLEM, WEAKEN CHILEAN POSITION ABROAD AND PROVIDE NEW AMMUNITION FOR LEFTIST AND OTHER CRITICS. CAUGHT IN THIS DILEMMA, CHILE'S LEADERS HAVE MOVED APPRECIABLY TOWARD A GO-IT-ALONE POLICY, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DOING WHAT THEY CAN TO MODIFY THE HOSTILE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT. FIRST APPROACH IS NOW ASCENDANT, BUT DOES NOT EXCLUDE SOME TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY. JUNTA'S SUCCESS IN APPEASING FOREIGN CRITICS HAS BEEN SLIGHT.

14. RELATIONS WITH U.S. ARE IMPORTANT TO CHILE'S LEADERS, FOR WITH KIND OF US SUPPORT THEY BELIEVE CHILE DESERVES, GOC COULD FACE REMAINING WORLD HOSTILITY WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE. THERE HAVE NEVERTHELESS BEEN DISAPPOINTMENTS ON BOTH SIDES, AND RELATIONS HAVE DETERIORATED SOMEWHAT IN RECENT MONTHS. NEXT PRIORITY IS LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, ESPECIALLY CHILE'S SOUTHERN CONE NEIGHBORS, WITH WHOM RELATIONS ARE NOW GENERALLY SATISFACTORY. PERU IS PARTICULAR PROBLEM: GOC HAS FEARED ATTACK AND SCOURED WORLD FOR ARMS WITH WHICH TO REPEL IT, BUT PACIFIC GESTURES BY BOTH STATES AND RECENT CHANGE OF PRESIDENTS IN LIMA HAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY RELIEVED SOME OF ITS CONCERN. GOC IS ALSO LOOKING OUTSIDE THE HEMISPHERE FOR KINDRED POLITICAL SPIRITS -- I.E., RIGHTWING ANTI-COMMUNISTS -- AND IN A SELF-PROCLAIMED SPIRIT OF PRAGMATISM HAS BEEN MAKING GESTURES TOWARD ARAB STATES, AFRICA, AND EVEN PRC. LEADERS HAVE NOT FOUND VIABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR U.S. BUT MAY BE COMFORTED TO AN EXTENT BY BELIEF THAT AS COPPER PRICES GO UP, ECONOMY RECOVERS, AND WORLD TIRES OF SENSATIONALIZING LOCAL EVENTS, CHILEAN POSITION IS BOUND TO IMPROVE. ANALOGIES OF FRANCO SPAIN AND OF BRAZIL UNDER MILITARY ARE OFTEN CITED.

15. OUTLOOK: ALTHOUGH TRUE PERSONAL DICTATORSHIP DOES NOT APPEAR PROBABLE IN CHILE, WE SEE LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT ELEMENTS IN OR OUT OF GOVERNMENT FAVORING LIBERALIZATION OF PRESENT REGIME

WILL PREVAIL. IF ANYTHING, MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS LOOK THE OTHER
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WAY. WE WOULD EXPECT SOME CONTINUING TACTICAL FLEXIBILITY,
BUT DOUBT THERE WILL BE ANY EARLY COMPROMISE ON WHAT GOC LEADERS
CONSIDER ESSENTIALS.

16. SHOULD ECONOMIC SITUATION IMPROVE, MUCH OF PRESENT GRUMBLING
AND DISCONTEFT WOULD SUBSIDE. BUT IN ANY EVENT,STHERE WILL
BE INCREASING PRESSURE TO EASE AUSTERITY PROGRAM TO MEET
SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS. LIKE MOST OTHER COUNTRIES, GOC WILL HAVE
TO PROCEED CAREFULLY IN RE-STIMULATING ECONOMY SO AS NOT TO
GIVE RISE TO NEW INFLATIONAY BINGE. THIS WILL BE ALL THE MORE
DIFFICULT IF BY YEAR'S END AUSTERITY PROGRAM HAS CONTINUED
TO DEPRESS ECONOMY WITHOUT REDUCINT INFLATION TO ACCEPTABLE LEVEL.
UNLESS THE COUNTRY CAN AVOID THE ALTERNATIVES OF CONTINUING DEPRESSION

OR MAJOR INFLATION, THE CIVIIAL ECONOMIC MINISTERS WILL
BECOME INITIAL SCAPEGOATS. BUT THE CONCEPT OF ULTIMATE JUNTA
RESPONSIBILITY WOULD BE VERY CLEAR.

17. MEANWHILE, THE OUTSIDE WORLD WILL CONTINUE TO VIEW GOC
LARGELY THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS PRISM. GIVEN PRECEDENCE ASSIGNED
TO INTERNAL SECURITY POLICY AND ABSENCE OF ANY INDICATION OF NOTABLE
RELAXATION IN SECURITY MEASURES OR PROCEDURES, GOC WILL CONTINUE
TO FIND ITSELF LARGELY ISOLATED AND DEFENSIVE AND ITS FRIENDS
ARE LIKELY TO FIND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO BE HELPFUL.

18. THUS WE SEE LITTE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT MAJOR CHANGES IN
CHILE ARE IMMINENT, WHETHER IN THE ECONOMIC OR THE POLITICAL
SPHERE. AT THE SAME TIME, PRESURES FOR CHANGE WILL CONTINUE
TO EXIST IN BOTH AREAS. THEIR ULTIMATE IMPACT MAY BECOME APPARENT
AS THE JUNTA REASSESSES ITS SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF 1976.

19. EMBASSY WILL BE POUCHING AIRGRAM THAT GOES INTO POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS IN GREATER DETAIL.
POPPER UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: JUNTA, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE247082
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARA-LA/PLC:RJBLOOMFIELD
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750362-0487
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197510102/baaaacwf.tel
Line Count: 312
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 JUN 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PINS, PROP, CI
To: NATO
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006